The Importance of Home Medicine Reviews for Safer Care

Managing medicines can be complicated, especially for people who live with chronic illnesses, take multiple prescriptions, or have recently been discharged from hospital. Many Australians face the challenge of remembering doses, understanding side effects, and keeping track of new prescriptions, which can sometimes result in confusion or even serious health risks. This is where a Home Medicine Review, also known as a **Domiciliary Medication Management Review**, plays an important role.

A Home Medicine Review is a service designed to make the use of medicines safer and more effective. With an HMR, a patient's General Practitioner initiates an HMR referral to an accredited pharmacist. This referral identifies patients who may benefit most from the service, such as those taking five or more medications, experiencing side effects, or having difficulty following complex treatment plans. Once referred, the pharmacist visits the patient in their home to conduct a thorough review of all prescribed, over-the-counter, and complementary medicines.

The review process is patient-centred. During the home visit, the pharmacist not only checks the types and dosages of medicines but also observes how they are stored, how they are taken, and whether there are any risks of interactions or duplications. Patients often feel more comfortable discussing their concerns in a home setting, which allows the pharmacist

to provide practical advice on everyday use, such as timing doses or reducing side effects. After the visit, the pharmacist prepares a report for the GP with recommendations, which the doctor then uses to create or update the patient's medication management plan.

The benefits of a **Home Medication Review** extend well beyond the individual patient. By identifying potential problems early, these reviews help prevent avoidable hospital admissions, reduce the likelihood of medicine-related complications, and support better long-term outcomes. Patients gain a clearer understanding of their medicines, which improves adherence and confidence. Families also benefit, as they gain peace of mind knowing their loved one's treatment is being monitored and adjusted where necessary. On a broader level, the healthcare system saves costs by reducing emergency visits and unplanned admissions linked to medication issues.

For General Practitioners, HMR referrals are an essential part of delivering comprehensive care. By partnering with accredited pharmacists, GPs can ensure their patients receive personalised advice and support in managing their medicines at home. For pharmacists, these reviews provide a unique opportunity to engage with patients in a meaningful way, beyond the pharmacy counter, and to contribute directly to safer healthcare outcomes.

In Australia, Home Medicine Reviews are supported through the Medicare Benefits Schedule, which means eligible patients can often access them without additional cost. This accessibility ensures that the service reaches those who need it most—older adults, people with complex prescriptions, and individuals at greater risk of medicine-related harm. Organisations like **DMMR Australia** play a vital role in streamlining this process, connecting doctors, patients, and pharmacists to ensure reviews are conducted efficiently and effectively.

Ultimately, a Domiciliary Medication Management Review is about much more than reviewing a list of prescriptions. It is about empowering patients, improving safety, and making sure medicines deliver the benefits they are intended to provide. By encouraging open communication between GPs, pharmacists, and patients, the Home Medication Review process strengthens trust, supports better health, and contributes to a safer, more effective healthcare system for everyone.